



# Get to Grips

with the Snare Drum



**Ulster-Scots Agency**  
Tha Boord o Ulstèr-Scotch









# Instructions

- For each piece of music there will be a tutorial video available. These can be accessed on our YouTube Channel 'Music Service for Pipes and Drums' with the corresponding video name or if you visit [www.mspds.org](http://www.mspds.org) and click on Online Instruction > Snare Drum you will find the video links to the corresponding number.

- Remember you will be viewing the tutorial videos as a mirror image.

- For additional help or if you're interested in online tuition via Zoom, you can message the Music Service for Pipes and Drums via Facebook or contact Barney on 07968056889.







# Introduction

When I was 8 years old, my parents took me up to my local pipe band. This is where I first seen the art of Snare Drumming, I was hooked right away, and so my journey began. This fantastic instrument has played a massive part in my life for the past 40 years, where it is now my profession. It has given me the opportunity to perform in some of the best bands in the world and in solo competitions, winning many accolades including World Titles. It has also given me many opportunities to travel abroad to compete, perform and pass on my knowledge. I have met many friends and musicians who have encouraged me to learn other Percussion Instruments.

Gets to Grips with the Snare Drum is a tutor led introductory guide to the art of Snare Drumming. It will guide the learner through the basic rudiments to start them on their journey of learning these drums. The text is simple, and as the student works through this tutor book they will discover the basic signs and symbols that are needed to read music.

This book includes links to tutorial videos to enable the student to learn the correct techniques required to eventually play at the highest level. Also included are hints and tips that are extremely important in aiding a student with perfecting their technique.

The Snare Drum is not a simple instrument to master, therefore requiring commitment and plenty of the big word 'PRACTICE'. The bonus in learning this instrument and what makes it so worthwhile, is that it gives you the hand skills to play any percussion instrument, from Marching Band Snare; Drum Kit; Hand Percussion; the list is endless.

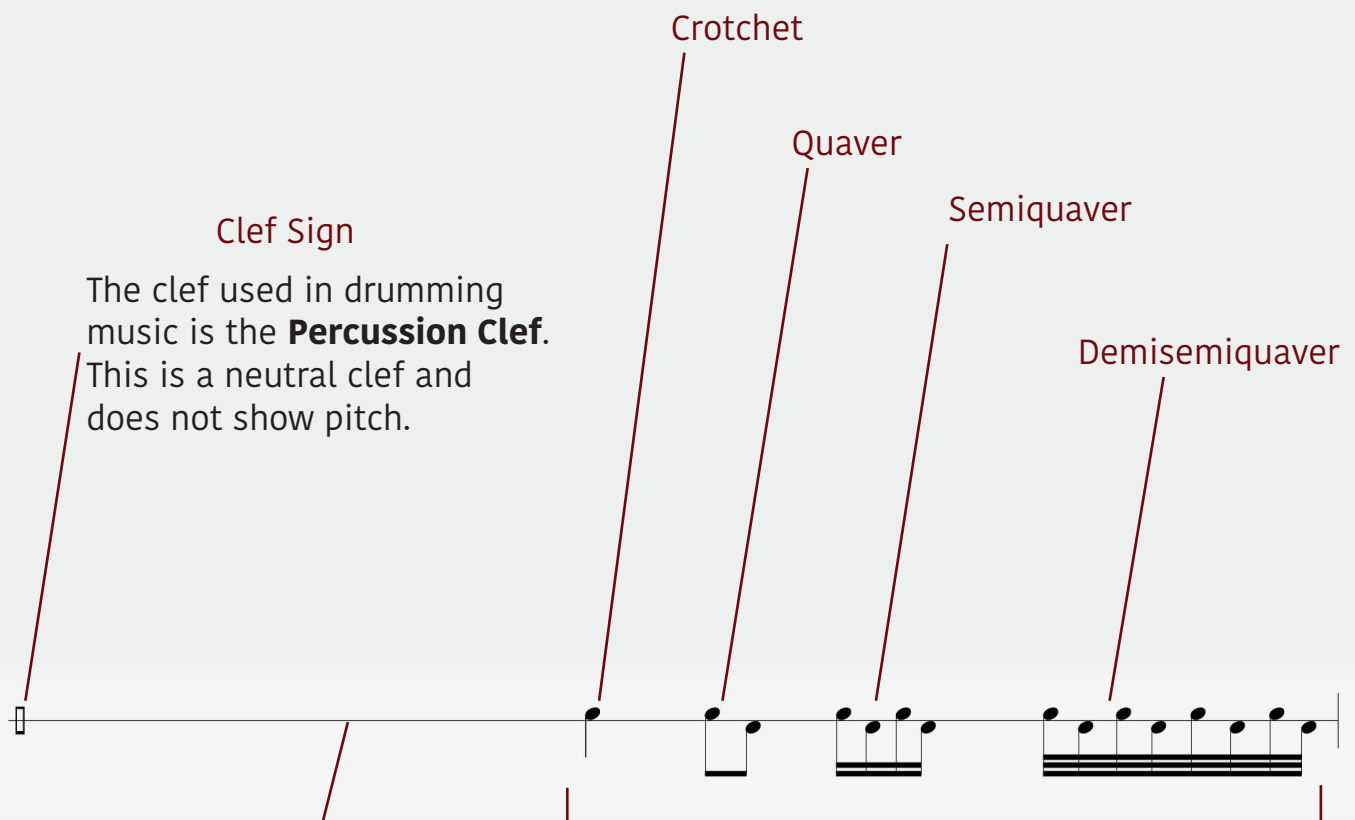
I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the art of Snare Drumming and wish you all the best of luck and fun with the opportunities that lie ahead.

Barney Megoran

Lead Drumming Tutor for the Music Service for Pipes and Drums



# Before we Begin



## Clef Sign

The clef used in drumming music is the **Percussion Clef**. This is a neutral clef and does not show pitch.

## Crotchet

## Quaver

## Semiquaver

## Demisemiquaver

## Single Line Stave

Single Line Staves are used for **single-pitched instruments** such as djembe, tamborine and snare drum. The note placed **above** the stave is the **Right hand**. The note placed **below** the stave is the **Left Hand**.

## Notes

There are many different note shapes which show the **duration/length** of a sound. The first 4 notes we see are Crotchet, Quaver, Semiquaver and Demisemiquaver.

The crotchet is the longest of these notes and the Demisemiquaver is the shortest.

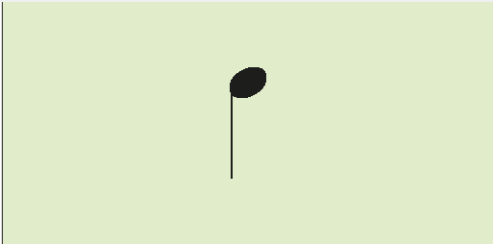
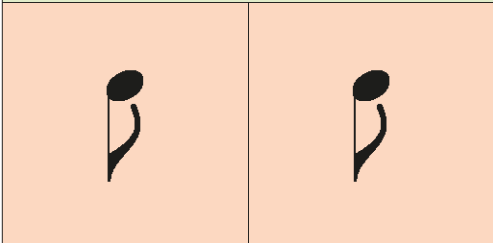
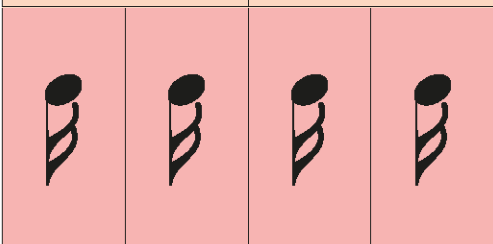
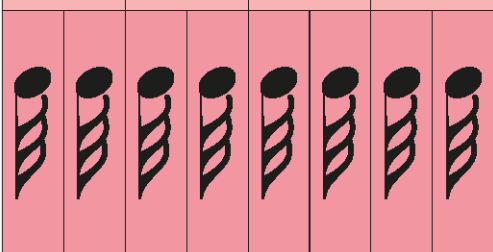
Throughout this digital book you will see the YouTube logo which is a link for a tutorial to aid your progress.



# Duration Table

The length of sounds are shown on paper by using different shaped notes. Below are the first **notes** we will see. In this example, the crotchet is the longest note. Each note is **half** the **length** of the note **above**.

For example, if a Crotchet is 1 second long, a Quaver will only be half a second long. We will show you the other notes in more detail later.

Crotchet		1/4 note
Quaver		1/8 note
Semiquaver		1/16 note
Demisemiquaver		1/32 note

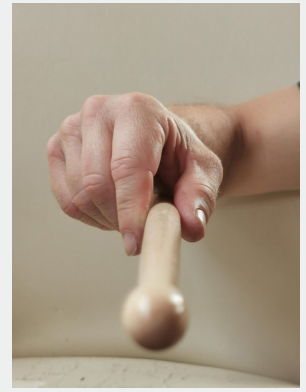
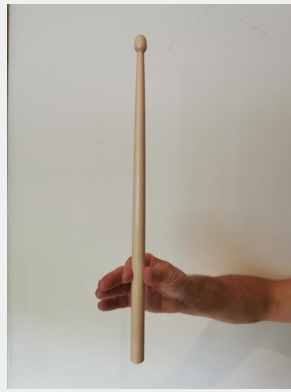


# Hand Placement <sup>1</sup>

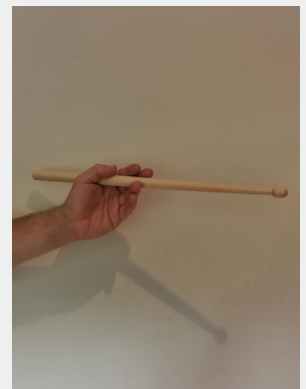
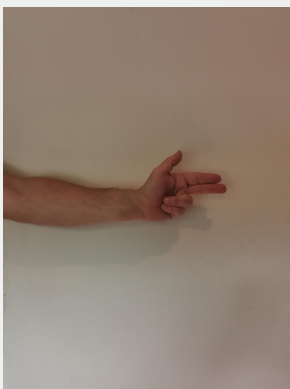


It is very important to perfect this early. Please refer to the video.

**Right hand:** With your right hand **above** the stick, **pinch** it with your **first finger** and **thumb** then place the rest of your finger tips onto the butt (or at least your next two fingers) and **push** it into the **palm** of your hand. Try to make a **straight line** between the **tip** of the **stick** and your **elbow**.



**Left Hand:** Put your left hand in a **toy gun** like **position**. Place the **butt** of the **stick** between your **thumb** and your **first finger**. The tip of the stick will then go **between** your **second** and **third fingers**. Place your **thumb** tip **gently** on **top** of the **stick**.



Playing/Striking your beats - **Hold** your **sticks loosely**, your grip technique is very important. You should be able to move the stick freely in each hand.

When you strike the drum/pad, your stick should **bounce** back up. Think of the motion when a **bouncy ball** hits the ground.



# Single Stroke

2



You will now attempt playing beats on alternate hands using polyrhythms to help you. As you play, try counting the number or saying the words indicated above and below the notes.

## The notes below are Crotchets

Right Hand

— — —

Left Hand

A musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The staff contains six quarter notes (crotchets) on the line G. Above the staff, the word "Car" is written above each note. Below the staff, the numbers "1" and "2" are written below each note, alternating: 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2.

## The notes below are Quavers.

Right Hand

— — —

Left Hand

A musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The staff contains six pairs of eighth notes (quavers) on the line G. Above the staff, the words "Foot- ball" are written above each pair. Below the staff, the numbers "1" and "&" are written below each pair, alternating: 1 &, 2 &, 1 &, 2 &, 1 &, 2 &.

## The notes below are Semi Quavers

Right Hand

— — —

Left Hand

A musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The staff contains six groups of eighth notes (semi quavers) on the line G. Above the staff, the words "HE-LI-COP-TER" are written above each group. Below the staff, the words "1 - a - n - d" and "2 - a - n - d" are written below each group, alternating: 1 - a - n - d, 2 - a - n - d, 1 - a - n - d, 2 - a - n - d, 1 - a - n - d, 1 - a - n - d.

## The notes below are Demi-Semi Quavers

Right Hand

— — —

Left Hand

A musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The staff contains six groups of sixteenth notes (demi-semi quavers) on the line G. The notes are grouped in pairs of three.

For this rhythm, you could use the poly-rhythm **su-per-ca-li-fra-gi-lis-tic**. This rhythm is also described as sounding like a machine gun.



# Mum-my Dad-dy's

3



This exercise focuses on playing **two beats** on **each hand**. Instead of counting numbers, it is often easier to say 'Right Left' or 'Mum-my Dad-dy'.

Right Hand

Mum - my Dad - dy Mum - my Dad - dy

Left Hand

R R L L R R L L

Right Hand

Mum-my Dad-dy Mum-my Dad-dy Mum-my Dad-dy Mum-my Dad-dy

Left Hand

R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L

As this exercise gets faster, continue to say Mum-my Dad-dy.

Right Hand

Left Hand

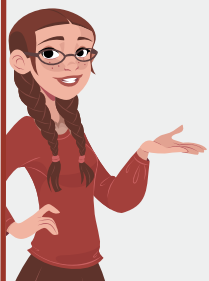
R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L

Right Hand

1 a n d 2 a n d 1 a n d 2 a n d 1 a n d 1 a n d 1 a n d 2 a n d

Left Hand

The Demisemiquavers are difficult to master. Persevere and this will come eventually.



**A bounce technique is required when striking. Strike your pad twice for each of the 1, the A, the N and the D.**



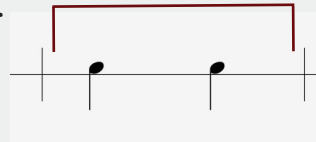
# Pa-ra-did-dle <sup>4</sup>



You will see a vertical line now appears across the stave. This is called a **Barline**. Barlines are used to separate the music in to **equal portions**.

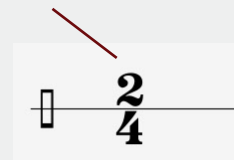


A **Bar** is the **space** is **between two Barlines**.



You will also see two numbers appear at the beginning of the stave. This is known as the **time signature**.

The top figure tells us there are 2 beats in each bar and the bottom figure tells us that each beat is equal to a Quarter Note/Crotchet.



This exercise is a mix of 'Single Strokes' and 'Mum-my Dad-dy's together. Once again, it is easier to begin this exercise by saying which hand you are using.

PA RA DID DLE PA RI DID DLE

R L R R L R L L

PA RA DID DLE PA RA DID DLE PA RA DID DLE PA RA DID DLE

R L R L R R L L L R L R L R R L R L L

R L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L

As this exercise gets faster, continue to say PA RA DID DLE.

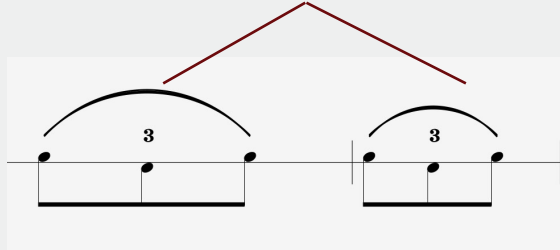


# Triplet

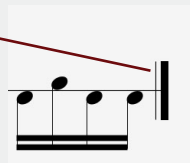
5



Triplets are when 3 notes are played in the time of 2 notes. An easy way to remember this technique is to say Tri-pl-et. This is how a Triplet is shown in music.



The next sign you will see is the **Double Barline**. This is used to show the end of a section of music.



Tri-pl-et Tri-pl-et Tri-pl-et Tri-pl-et Tri-pl-et Tri-pl-et Tri-pl-et Tri-pl-et

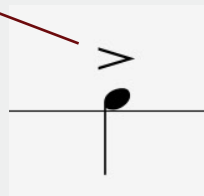
1 i d 2 i d 1 i d 2 i d 1 i d 2 i d 1 i d 2 i d

# The Accented Triplet

5



You will now notice an **accent** symbol now appearing on the music. This tells you to apply more **stress** on a **note**, which is achieved by lifting your stick a little higher and striking the note slightly harder.



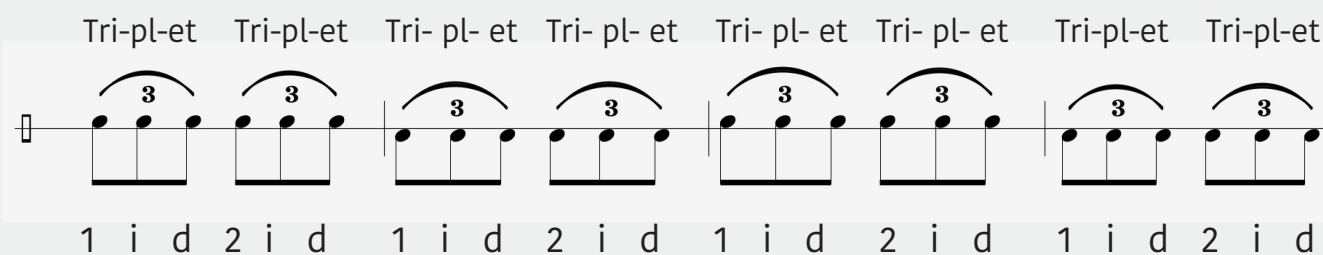
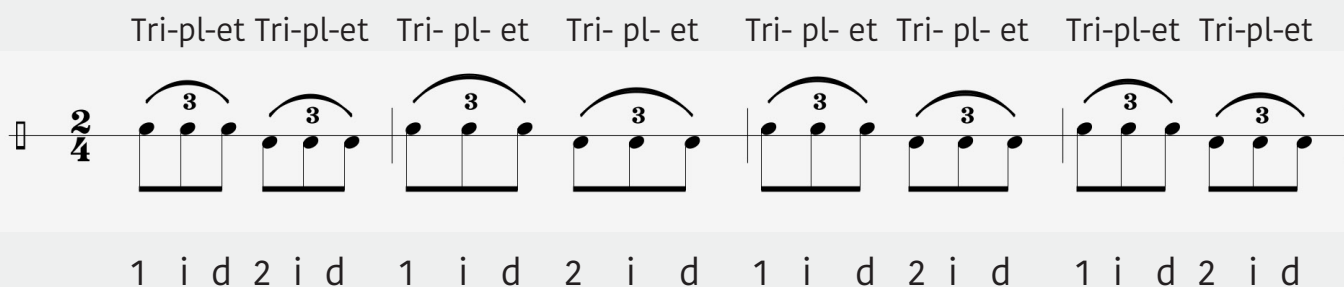
Tri- pl- et Tri- pl- et Tri-pl-et Tri-pl-et Tri-pl-et Tri-pl-et Tri-pl-et Tri-pl-et

1 i d 2 i d 1 i d 2 i d 1 i d 2 i d 1 i d 2 i d

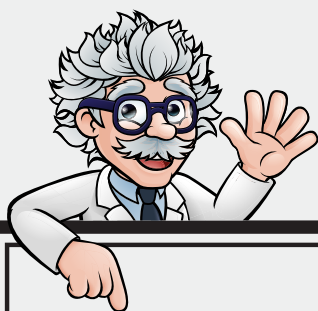
# The Triplet Hand Exercise<sup>5</sup>



This exercise will help you learn how to use the fingers on your Right Hand and the thumb on your Left Hand. This helps to develop flexibility and speed in your hands, a valuable technique.



Practice both hands individually; the right hand to get your fingers working and the left hand to get your thumb working.



A Pipe Band is louder than a pneumatic drill.



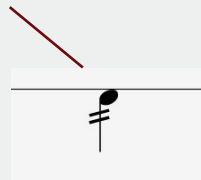
# Continuous Roll Development

6



This exercise will demonstrate what a **drum roll** is made up of and will show you how to play it.

Now you will see the '**Buzz**' symbol. This tells you that the strike is not a bouncy ball beat. You should **compress** the **stick down/push** the stick **into** the **pad**, leaning in to it slightly but still maintaining a relatively **loose grip**. If your **grip** is too **tight**, you will **kill** the **buzz**.



Buzz Buzz Buzz Buzz Buzz Buzz Buzz Buzz

1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2

B = Buzz

B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B

1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2 &

B B

1-a-n-d 2-a-n-d 1-a-n-d 2-a-n-d 1-a-n-d 2-a-n-d 1-a-n-d 2-a-n-d

The Semiquaver buzz rhythm is the beginning of a **drum roll sound**. To play a drum roll you must be able to play at least four Semi-Quaver Buzz Taps.



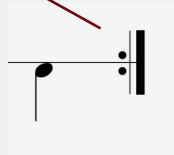


# Crotchet Roll

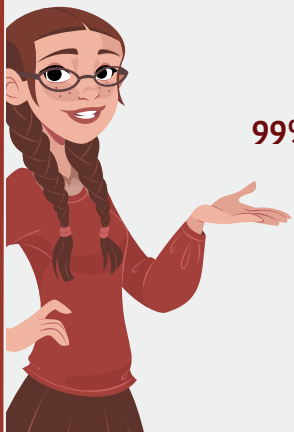
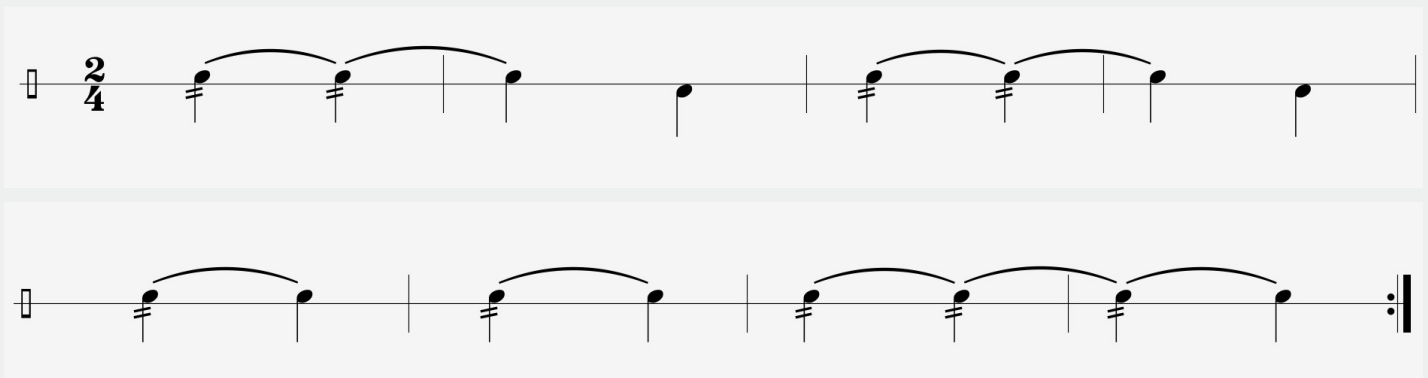
7



Now you will see the **repeat** sign. When this appears the **end** of a **section of music**, you must play that section of music **twice**.



This is our first drum roll exercise made up of different roll lengths with beats at the end.



99% of all Drum Rolls will finish with a beat.

Drums made from Alligator skins were found in China dated from 5500 BC.



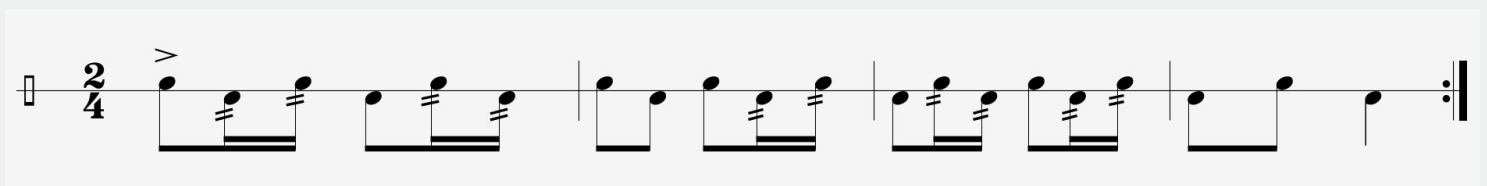
# Five Stroke Roll <sup>8</sup>



This is your first **Quaver Roll**. Each **buzz** equals **2** and the **beat** at the end equals **1**, so we have:

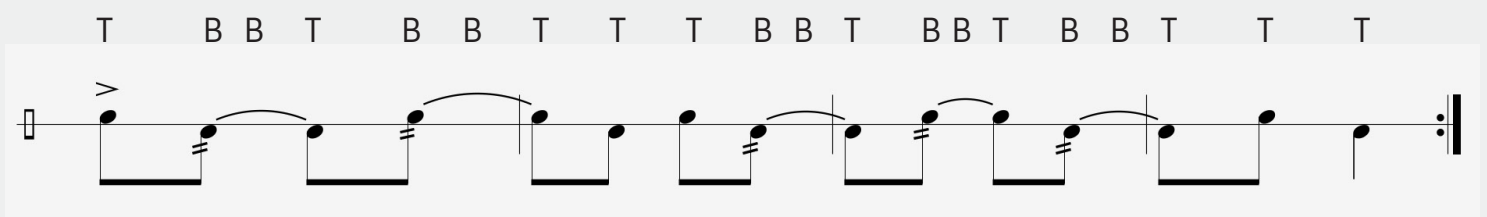
buzz + buzz + beat = 5 stroke roll

$$2 + 2 + 1 = 5$$

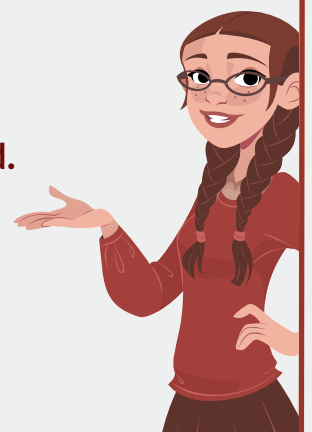


The music above is broken down to show you how it is played. Below you will see how a Five Stroke Roll is written in music.

T = Tap B = Buzz



A Five Stroke Roll **starts and finishes on the same hand.**





# Seven Stroke Roll

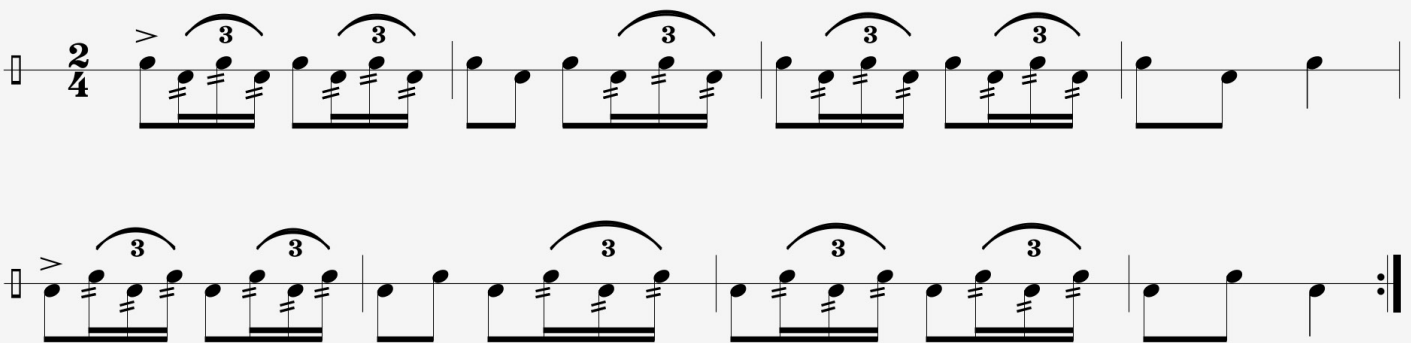
9



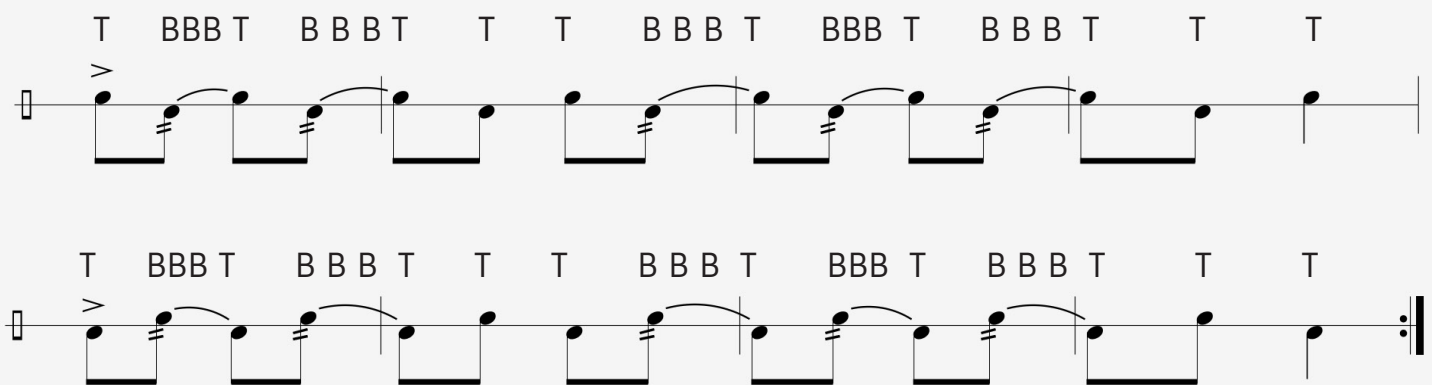
Similar to the Five Stroke Roll, this is also a **Quaver Roll**. Each **buzz** equals **2** and the **beat** at the end equals **1**, so we have:

buzz + buzz + buzz + beat = 7 stroke roll

$$2 + 2 + 2 + 1 = 7$$



The music above is broken down to show you how it is played. Below you will see how a Seven Stroke Roll is written in music.



A Seven Stroke Roll **starts and finishes on opposite hands.**

The Seven Stroke Roll is played in the same time as a Five Stroke Roll. The buzzes need to be played faster to achieve this.

# Nine Stroke Roll

10



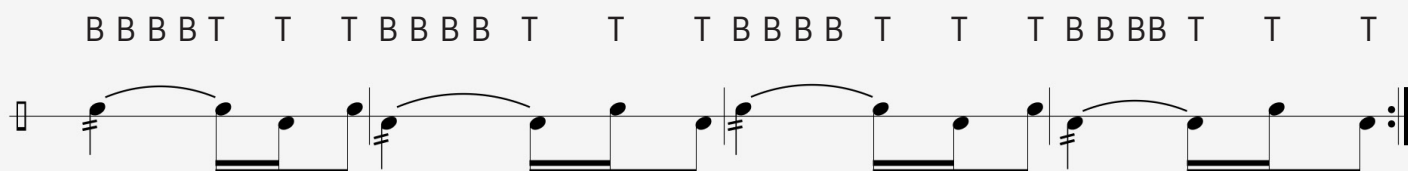
This is a **Crotchet roll**. Each **buzz** equals **2** and the **beat** at the end equals **1**, so we have:

buzz + buzz + buzz + buzz + beat = 9 stroke roll

2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 1 = 9



The music above is broken down to show you how it is played. Below you will see how a Nine Stroke Roll is written in music.



The two taps at the end of the roll are to make this exercise more interesting and to aid your development in mastering the Nine Stroke Roll.



The Snare from a drum used to be made from animal guts stretched across the skin.





# Thirteen Stroke Roll <sup>11</sup>



This is also a **crotchet roll**. Each **buzz** equals **2** and the **beat** at the end equals **1**, so we have:

buzz + buzz + buzz + buzz + buzz + buzz + beat = 13 stroke roll.

2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 1 = 9

The Thirteen Stroke Roll is played in the same time as a Nine Stroke Roll. The buzzes need to be played faster to achieve this.

The music above is broken down to show you how it is played. Below you will see how a Thirteen Stroke Roll is written in music.

For a Thirteen Stroke Roll, the Slur Line represents 6 buzzes and 1 tap.



When you are counting the Thirteen Stroke Roll, count the buzzes as triplets.

1 2 3 1 2 3 Tap

A Nine Stroke Roll has 2 lines on the stem whereas a Thirteen Stroke Roll has 3 lines on the stem.

# Flams

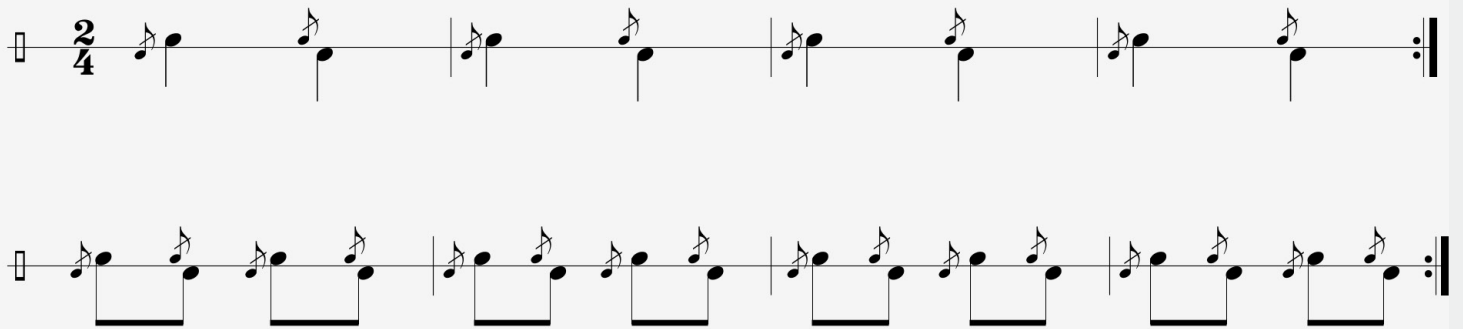
12



: This symbol represents a Flam.

The **Flam** is the first **embellishment** in drumming. An embellishment can be described as adding colour to a note, giving it more impact or making the sound broader/thicker.

To play a flam, you need to use both hands. You have a **high hand** and a **low hand**. The **lower hand strikes first**.

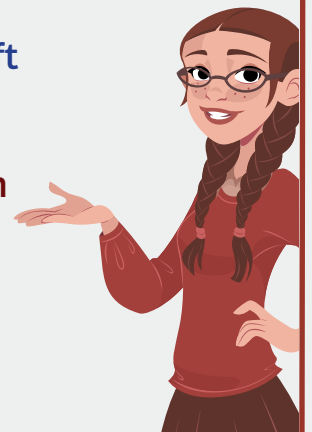


To play a right hand flam, have your right hand high. To play a left hand flam, have your left hand high.

The embellishment symbol is always your low hand and the main note is always your high hand.



Nathan Futrell is said to be the youngest serving Soldier. He joined the North Carolina Militia as a drummer during the American War of Independence aged 7.



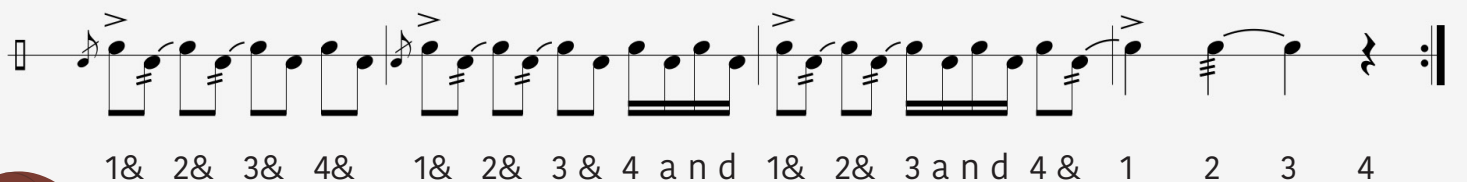
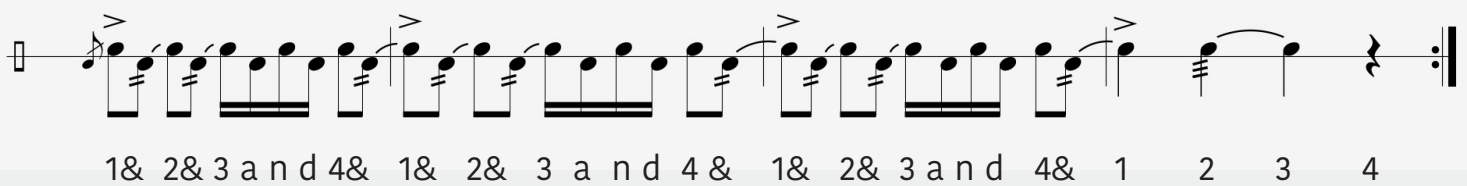
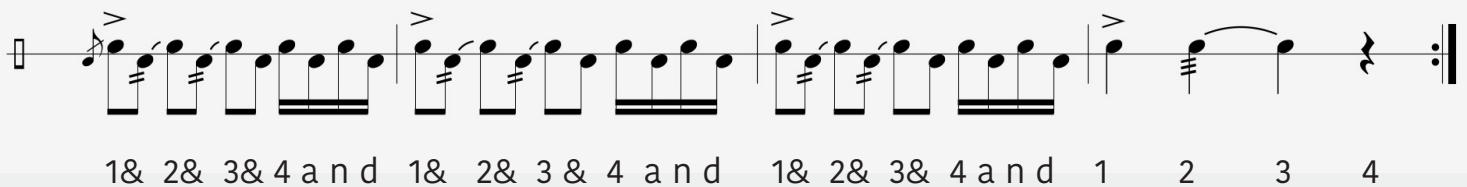
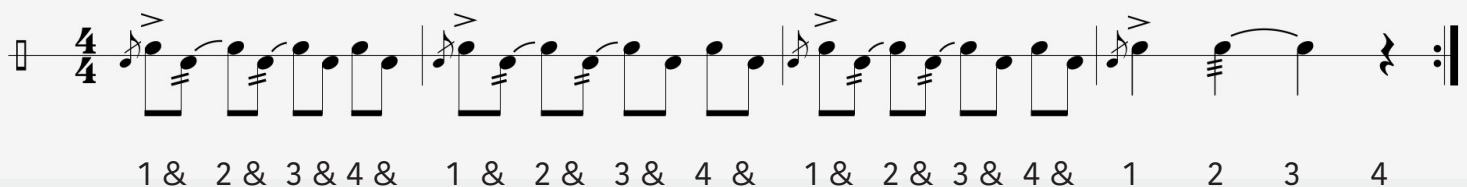
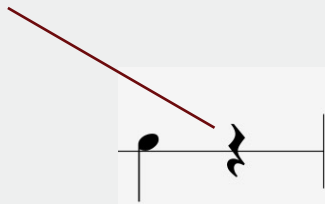


# Green Glens of Antrim<sup>13</sup>



The first tune will cover the majority of what you have been taught so far. As you can see, the **time signature** is **4/4**. This means there is **4 beats** in each **bar** and each **beat** is equal to **one Crotchet**.

You will now notice your first **Rest** symbol. Similar to notes, there are different types of rests with each shape representing a different length. In music, a rest represents a period of **silence**.



If you play the tunes without the embellishments, you are playing the **Monotone** of the tune. The numbers and letters written below the notes express the Monotone.

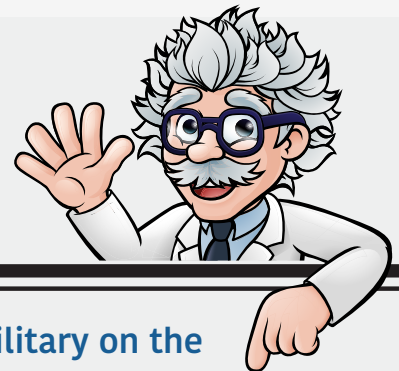
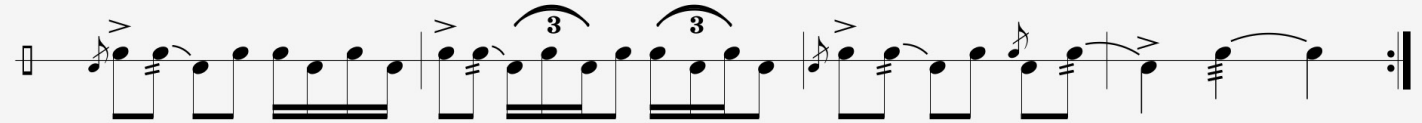
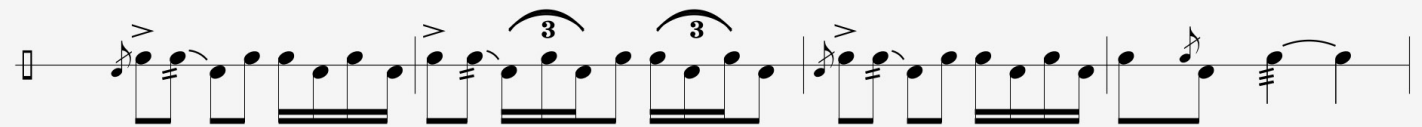
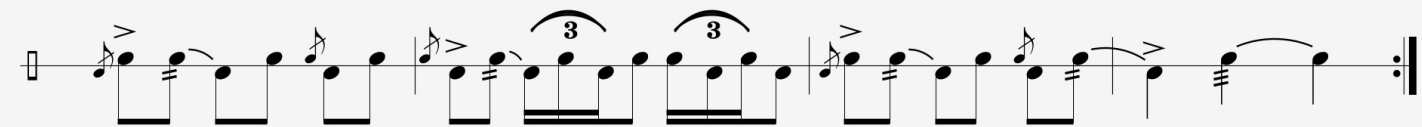
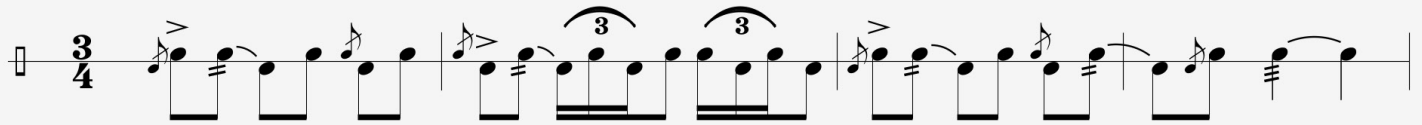
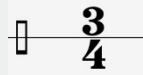
Tapping these out before attempting to play the tune will help you understand the rhythm of the music and aid your learning.

# I See Mull

14



As you can see, the **time signature** is **3/4**. This means there is **3 beats** in each **bar** and each **beat** is equal to **one Crotchet**.



Hundreds of years ago drums were used by the military on the battlefields for signals to give specific orders.

# Colin's Cattle

15



You will now notice a Dot and Cut placed on the notes. **Dots lengthen** the **note** and **Cuts shorten** the note.



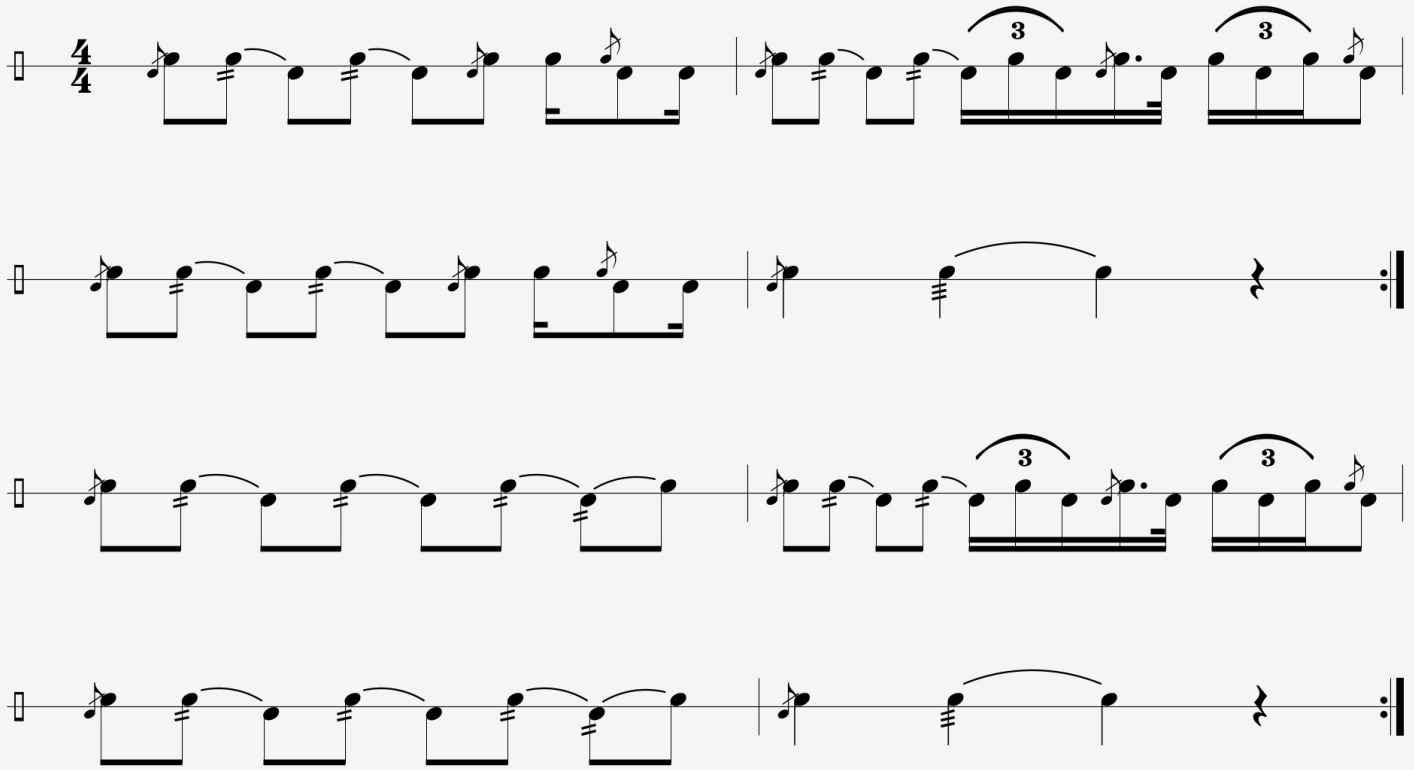
When you are learning a tune, learn one bar at a time, then try playing them as a group of two. Once you feel ready, play the full line.

Two Bars are known as a Phrase.



# Minstrel Boy

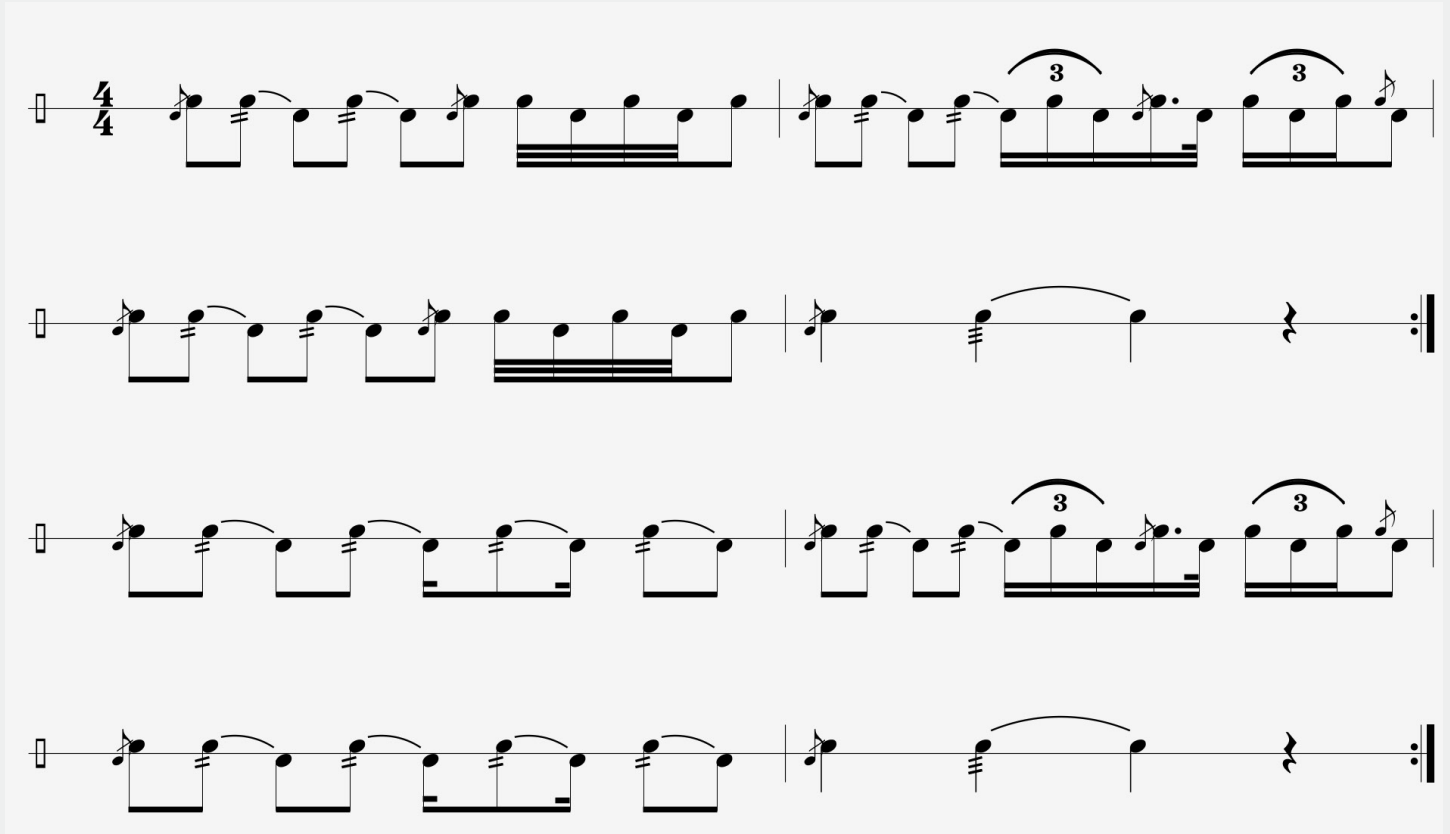
16



As you increase the Tempo of your tunes, make sure your embellishments and rudiments remain clear.



# Blue Bells of Scotland <sup>17</sup>

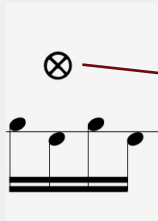


**Practice Tip:** Make sure your drumsticks are always visible and not stored away.

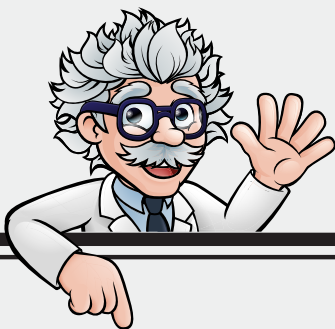
Every time you notice your sticks, lift them and play something. Even if it's only for a few seconds.

# I Love a Lassie

18



This symbol represents backsticking. This is when you strike the drum with the opposite end of your stick.

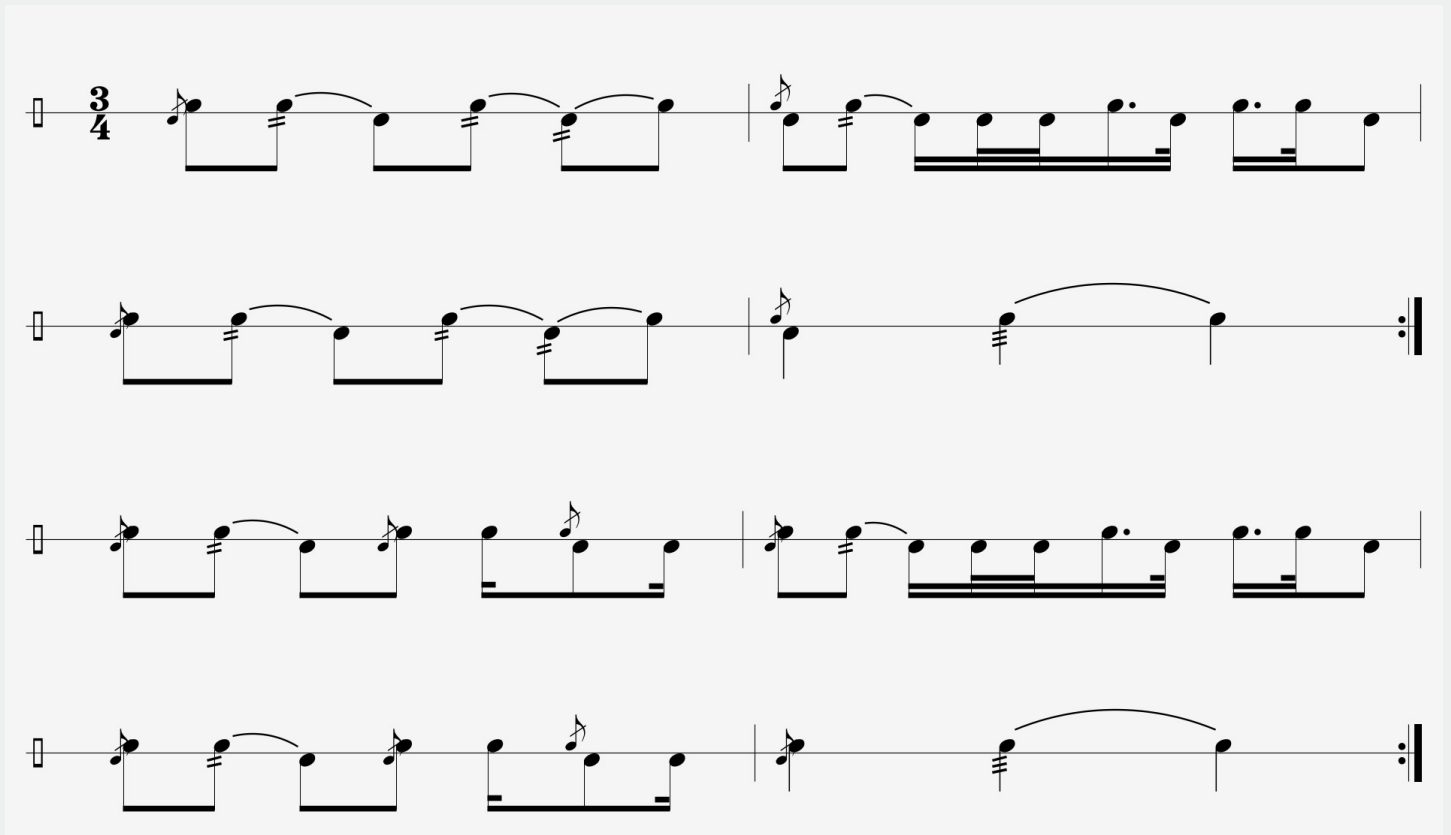


Two of the most successful Pipe Bands are Field Marshal Montgomery from Lisburn and St Laurence O'Toole from Dublin.



# Castle Dangerous

19



When you discover a difficult part in the music, lift this bar or phrase out and practice it separately. For example, like bar 2 in the music above.

# The Flam Tap Exercise

20



The following two exercises will help you develop the Flam embellishment.



# The Flam Bounce Exercise

21



# The Flam Triplet

22



This exercise will help you develop the Flam embellishment and Triplet.

The exercise is written in 2/4 time and consists of four staves, each containing four measures. The notation includes various musical symbols for triplets and flam ornaments.

- Staff 1:** Each measure contains a triplet of eighth notes. The first and third notes of each triplet are marked with an accent (>) and a flam symbol (v). The notes are beamed together with a slur and a '3' above them.
- Staff 2:** Each measure contains two groups of eighth notes. The first group is a triplet of eighth notes, and the second group is a pair of eighth notes. The first note of the triplet and the first note of the pair are marked with an accent (>) and a flam symbol (v). Each group is beamed together with a slur and a '3' above the triplet.
- Staff 3:** Each measure contains two groups of eighth notes. The first group is a triplet of eighth notes, and the second group is a pair of eighth notes. The first note of the triplet and the first note of the pair are marked with an accent (>) and a flam symbol (v). Each group is beamed together with a slur and a '3' above the triplet.
- Staff 4:** Each measure contains two groups of eighth notes. The first group is a triplet of eighth notes, and the second group is a pair of eighth notes. The first note of the triplet and the first note of the pair are marked with an accent (>) and a flam symbol (v). Each group is beamed together with a slur and a '3' above the triplet.



# The Triplet - Shifting the Accent and the Flam



This musical score is written for a guitar in 2/4 time. It consists of ten staves, each containing four measures of music. The notation is as follows:

- Staff 1:** Four measures of eighth-note triplets. The first measure has an accent (>) on the first note. The second measure has an accent on the second note. The third measure has an accent on the third note. The fourth measure has an accent on the first note.
- Staff 2:** Four measures of eighth-note triplets. The first measure has an accent on the first note. The second measure has an accent on the second note. The third measure has an accent on the third note. The fourth measure has an accent on the first note.
- Staff 3:** Four measures of eighth-note triplets. The first measure has an accent on the first note. The second measure has an accent on the second note. The third measure has an accent on the third note. The fourth measure has an accent on the first note.
- Staff 4:** Four measures of eighth-note triplets. The first measure has an accent on the first note. The second measure has an accent on the second note. The third measure has an accent on the third note. The fourth measure has an accent on the first note.
- Staff 5:** Four measures of eighth-note triplets. The first measure has an accent on the first note. The second measure has an accent on the second note. The third measure has an accent on the third note. The fourth measure has an accent on the first note.
- Staff 6:** Four measures of eighth-note triplets. The first measure has an accent on the first note. The second measure has an accent on the second note. The third measure has an accent on the third note. The fourth measure has an accent on the first note.
- Staff 7:** Four measures of eighth-note triplets. The first measure has an accent on the first note. The second measure has an accent on the second note. The third measure has an accent on the third note. The fourth measure has an accent on the first note.
- Staff 8:** Four measures of eighth-note triplets. The first measure has an accent on the first note. The second measure has an accent on the second note. The third measure has an accent on the third note. The fourth measure has an accent on the first note.
- Staff 9:** Four measures of eighth-note triplets. The first measure has an accent on the first note. The second measure has an accent on the second note. The third measure has an accent on the third note. The fourth measure has an accent on the first note.
- Staff 10:** Four measures of eighth-note triplets. The first measure has an accent on the first note. The second measure has an accent on the second note. The third measure has an accent on the third note. The fourth measure has an accent on the first note.

# The Accented Paradiddle <sup>24</sup>



Two staves of musical notation for 'The Accented Paradiddle' in 4/4 time. The top staff features a sequence of eighth notes with accents (>) on the first, third, fifth, and seventh notes of each four-note group. The bottom staff features a sequence of eighth notes with accents (>) on the first, third, fifth, and seventh notes of each four-note group. Both staves end with a repeat sign.

# The Flam Paradiddle <sup>25</sup>



Two staves of musical notation for 'The Flam Paradiddle' in 4/4 time. The top staff features a sequence of eighth notes with flams (a small 'f' symbol) on the first, third, fifth, and seventh notes of each four-note group. The bottom staff features a sequence of eighth notes with flams (a small 'f' symbol) on the first, third, fifth, and seventh notes of each four-note group. Both staves end with a repeat sign.

# The Paradiddle - Shifting the Accent and the Flam

26



# The Dot and Cut Exercise

27







You have now completed Get to Grips with the  
the Snare Drum.

Thanks to the Ulster-Scots Agency for making  
this project possible and a special thanks to  
Andy McGregor and Grahame Harris for  
proofreading this book.

Follow us on social media ‘Music Service for  
Pipes and Drums’ for regular updates and  
events.

A stylized logo consisting of two red, curved lines that cross each other in the middle, resembling a large 'X' or a pair of crossed arms.

**Ulster-Scots Agency**  
Tha Boord o Ulstèr-Scotch